

# THE PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER

Official publication of the Philadelphia Division of the Mid-Eastern Region,

National Model Railroad Association

January 2011 Volume 18, Number 1

http://www.phillynmra.org/



The New Jersey Division and the Philadelphia Division will hold a joint meet on Saturday, January 15 at the Haddon Township High School at 9am. (Directions to the meet are on page 7 of this issue).

Activities currently scheduled include the contest, which this time is "Prototype Railroad Photographs," white elephant sale items, and clinic presentations.

On the clinic schedule at this time, Philadelphia Division member, John Greene, will present his clinic, "Milk cars and Milk marketing." Since the deadline for this issue is well ahead of the meet date, the topics and presenters for the other clinic(s) are not yet definite. Possible topics include "Railroads of South Jersey Part two," a continuation of Pete Suhmann's clinic from the November meet, and a presentation discussion "Why I started over, or Drat You Tony Koester" by the author of this article.

In addition we will have the usual awards and announcements, door prizes and raffle items, and, of course, coffee and camaraderie with time to get together for one on one chats.

We will have a larger than normal selection of home layouts this meet. So much so that at least eight will be open on Friday night before the meet, with some being open only Friday night. The complete list with maps and directions will be included in the mailed and emailed versions of the New Jersey Division newsletter, *Clinkers*.

In addition to the NJ layout tours, Dick Foley will have his Reading layout open for the Pennsylvania contingent (and NJ members) to visit on the way home. Dick is located near the Philadelphia Art Museum. Dick has recently presented his Reading Clinic at a joint NJ/Philly meet.

Maps and directions for all of the Saturday afternoon open houses will be available at the meet as usual.

For privacy reasons the hosts for the Friday Night Tour will not be included in the online version. If you think you would like to take the Friday Night Tour, and are not already on our email list, send an email to me at BobcatCS@comcast.net with the subject "January layout tour" and I'll be happy to send the newsletter to you by return email.

Included here are a few pictures of the layouts you can see on the tour. From top to bottom, Perennial favorite, Doc Patti's On3 logging railroad which will be open both Friday night and Satur- day afternoon, Bob Price's Burlington Northern, which is tentative at this writing, and Dick Kitz's California mountains themed rail- road. At the bottom, Dick Perry's Perryville & Highlands Railroad. These last two will be open only on Friday night.

There is no cost to any NMRA member visiting the New Jersey Division. Please come and enjoy!









Form 19 from the Editor



Greetings to all!
I am writing this editorial during our first major early-winter cold spell.

My basement Reading railroad has been the focus of my attention for the past several weeks and I am finally making some progress on scenicing the major yard. The track is painted and ready for ballast. Many supertrees are in place in front of the photomural of the actual prototype site. I am pumped and forging ahead!

A voice of reason, however, came in the form of a warning from my round robin crew. "Debug all the track and turnouts BEFORE you ballast".

I am far too often in a rush to get things operating and the yard runs fine with my various diesel locos, but my wise round robin mentor grinned as he placed my Reading T-1 (and a visiting Santa Fe 0-8-0 steam switcher) on the rails. He then stood back with his arms crossed and waited.

My resulting reality check was sobering! Those 2 steamers found many dips, bad joints, and other track problems that the diesels had not. And here I thought that homasote was flat! I promptly halted ballasting, scenicing and painting.

What followed were several long hours of track repairs, shims and realigned joints. I also added many more electrical drops. This time I was determined that the yard would pass the "T-1 test".

It did and my railroad is better for it. I can now proceed with paint, ballasting and scenery and sleep at night. This layout is too large to not get it right the first time!

The moral of the story ... I am very thankful for the support and knowledgeable help I receive

(and hopefully give back). The social contacts made through our NMRA Division are invaluable.

Be it a round robin, a club, or just some interested friends, it is worth breaking out of what is known as the "lone wolf syndrome". The friendships that develop are often life-long.

I was a lone wolf far too long and wish I had contacted others earlier. If you find yourself in a similar situation, why not contact a fellow member to share what you are working on?

A good place to start is the Member-Aide section of our website....

http://www.phillynmra.org/MemberAid.html.

Another is to come out to a division meeting (info on page 1). New faces are always welcome. Members are wearing nametags and would love to meet you!

See you in New Jersey! Earl

## May 2011 Meet News (and date change)

The Exec Board is always looking for new and exciting venues and topics for our Division Meets.

This coming May, tentative plans include a joint Division meet with the East Coast Sante Fe Modelers at Del Valley College in Doylestown, PA.

Presenting will be Steve Priest (NMRA.Magazine), D. Bronson (RR Circuits), & Josh Shedecker (Tonys Trains) among other fine clinicians. This will give us a chance to visit with these out of town names, and also share in the Santa Fe activities.

# THE DATE FOR THIS MEET HAS BEEN CHANGED TO MAY 7.

Stay tuned for further news as planning proceeds.

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Official publication of the Philadelphia Division, National Model Railroad Association www.phillynmra.org

Editor

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Submissions: The PHILADELPHIA DISPATCHER welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. The editor reserves the right to, when necessary, paraphrase small portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

**Next issue:** Mar. '11. Due out approx. March 5. Deadline: Apr 15.

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### From the Division Superintendent

by Greg Shindledecker



As some of you know, I drive almost 140 miles each day to and from work. This gives me a lot of time to occupy – especially when the traffic is bad. I fill some of this wasted time listening to Podcasts.

For those of you who have never heard of these, they are downloadable digital media files that can be played similarly to digital music. In my case, I play these through car stereo. I've recently been listening to the Scotty Mason Show - a model railroad podcast in which they discuss various model railroad topics and interview guests like Tony Koester or folks from one of the hobby manufacturers. It is very entertaining and interesting listening – almost like being in the middle of a discussion at a Division meet or like a group of folks hanging out in the layout room.

One of the recent discussion topics (actually a tangent to the main topic) was the relevancy of general interest print publications in model railroading. It is the opinion of some that magazines such as RMC and MR will eventually fade away in print. We have already seen the demise of at least three hobby magazines over the last few years. Observe how much less advertising is contained in the hobby magazines and how thin the some of them have become recently.

The Podcast discussion mentioned that Model Railroad Hobbyist, the online magazine published free by Joe Fugate, is gaining both readership and advertisers. Also the NMRA is moving in a big way to provide more and more on-line content. We have also seen this on Kalmbach's Trains.com and our Division is pushing the on-line Dispatcher over printed newsletters.

One of the things that printed magazines cannot provide is the instant, up to date content that on-line delivery can. For good or bad, people today don't want to wait! A good example of where this is in full-force is with purchasing from companies such as ExactRail. If you were to wait for the print publication, the entire run of desired cars would be long-gone!

Whether or not this transition is gradual or it happens quickly, it *will* happen. As better electronic readers become available, viewing or maybe listening to magazines online will become easier and eventually second nature. In a few years, I guess our porcelainthroned reading rooms will be equipped with a netbook, Kindle or iPad!

**Greg Shindledecker Division Superintendent** 

### Logan MRR Club Report

By Mike Napoletano

The Logan Model Railroad Club started in 1963 and was located in the old Reading station in the Logan (Olney) section of Philadelphia. In 1972, the club moved to its present location on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Souderton train station.

The layout depicts a fictional railroad the runs southeast from the NW corner of Pennsylvania to Harrisburg. The double tracked mainline runs through beautiful mountain scenery and features logging and mining operations. Long freight drags of 80-100+ cars requiring helper service add interest to our operating sessions. Upon reaching Harrisburg the line connects to the PRR. Our agreement with the PRR also allows the PRR to re-route their east-west trains over our lines in case there are problems on Horseshoe Curve or the Gallitzen tunnels.



The layout was originally wired for DC cab control, but was converted to a Digitrax wireless DCC system in 2009. The signaling system was nearly complete but it is now being converted to be compatible with the DCC system. The turnouts are electrically operated, mostly by twin coil machines. The scenery is about 95% complete.

We meet on Thursday evenings from 7-10pm and welcome all guests. For further information contact Mike Napoletano at: (267) 474-3235 or visit our website at: http://www.loganmrr.com.

### Classifieds



I'm building a new HO layout and can use the following items:

\*Flextrack and turnouts, \*Code 100 NS, \*Cork roadbed, \*DCC system New or used. Will purchase or trade. I have excess locos, cars, dual-gauge track and turnouts, lots of passenger cars, some brass, G-gauge track, & locos. Contact Joe Bergmaier at 610-269-8558 or email: mojo@bergmaier.com

Philadelphia Dispatcher Page 3 January '11



If you ever wondered what it would be like to own your own model railroad company, you're not alone. In upcoming issues of your Philly Division Dispatcher newsletter we will endeavor to highlight some of our local homegrown model railroad companies. Our first one being a real rising star company in the DCC arena: Train Control Systems in Blooming Glen PA.

I took a ride out to meet John Forsythe and his crew recently. John is one who is living the dream of having his own company catering to model railroaders with innovative products that are in much

demand. Train Control Systems, or TCS as it is better known, produces a very broad range of DCC decoders and they are all made right in John's basement. There are basements, and then there's John's...one most of us would drool over. It's huge and John, who also built his own house, planned it that way knowing that someday he would have some form of business down there.

But let's back up a little and find out how TCS came to be. John has been interested in model railroading since his youth and had built both HO and N scale layouts. He used to work full time for Bethlehem Steel as an electronics technician. In addition to trouble shooting electronics around the plant, one of his duties was taking care of their remote control locomotives. The plant was a spider-web of dual gauge trackage with RDG, LV and PB&NE equipment and working in close proximity to all that activity kept his railroading interests alive along with the hope that someday he would be able to mix his favorite interests: model railroading and electronics.

John was an early command control pioneer and developed his own CTC-16 system based on ideas from Keith Gutierrez. As the cost for microcontrollers started to come down, he learned how to program them. Along the way, he developed his own wireless infrared command station using UARTS – Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter Technology. Built in the mid 1980s, this system was wireless with 256 speed steps and 4-digit addressing! But the industry was moving toward DCC as we know it today and John started working on decoders. In the meantime, things did not bode well for the US Steel industry and his job at Beth Steel came to an end. Luckily, he was able to get a similar job with Carpenter in Reading right by the former tracks of his, and your author's, favorite railroad. I couldn't help noticing that a considerable portion of the supply of samples that TCS uses for decoder development sport Reading markings.



John's first decoder was his AEM-7. He started producing decoders commercially as a sideline business in 1999 but never dreamed at the time that he would ever be able to support his wife and 5 children on this business alone. However, attending the NMRA convention in San Jose and sharing a booth with Loy Spurlock of Loy's Toys changed his thinking. Loy became a mentor to John providing him with feedback on marketing, features to include, pricing, and most of all the encouragement to make building decoders a full time commitment. John credits Loy's early support and mentoring as a key to the success he is having today

In the early days of TCS, John worked a 40-hour week at CarTech while putting in another 40-hour week as essentially all of TCS. He used to call potential customers during his drive time to and from Reading. This involved a lot of cold calling of dealers but he was having a 40% success rate as word of his decoders spread. A big challenge to all this multi-tasking was trying to take an order while driving.

Shortly after San Jose and armed with the confidence that he could make better decoders, TCS began producing JST type decoders followed by drop-in decoders for Atlas and other manufacturers locomotives. A strong supporter of n-scale, TCS now has all of Atlas covered for drop-in decoders including the older style frames with separate front and rear light boards. The determination to make the best decoders has led John to such innovations as incorporating dither, which acts like pulse power in starting a locomotive but it's all done with the decoder. The voltage bounces back and forth creating an effect that emulates pulse power. Dither actually predates back EMF.

Quiet drive is another innovation for which TCS decoders are noted. John was determined to come up with a way to address back EMF without compromising decoder performance or any other functions. He did the R&D working 10 to 12 hours a day for a good 12 weeks before coming up with the solution. The TCS version of back EMF works across all scales and products. It automatically adjusts to the speed steps. The problem that had to be overcome in development was the arcing and noise created at low speeds requiring compensation not needed at high speed steps. Due to these innovations, TCS is currently growing in Europe despite the heavy presence there of early back EMF developer Lenz. (continued...)

(TCS continued from page 4...)

In addition to John and his wife Gwen, who does the day-to-day managing of the business, TCS has 6 full-time employees and 3 part-timers. John concentrates on R&D and product development along with his son, John D. It is very much a family business and the whole TCS team is pretty much regarded as "family". His basement is very clean, well organized and has the look and feel of a well run business. All the production is done on the premises as well as software development, design, assembly and packaging. TCS even sports 2 surface mount pick-and-place machines.

I asked John if he had any words of wisdom to pass on to others who may share the dream of having their own model railroad business. "Overwhelming commitment and passion" is required to succeed. When he went for the loan for his first pick-and-place machine the bank told him only one out of 10 businesses succeed. In addition to the expected sacrifice and hard work, John says "persistence, not brilliance" is the real driver. "Whatever time you think it will take to emerge successful, double or triple it". Last but not least, is to have a supportive family. John credits much of TCS' success to the support and hard work of Gwen. "Not many wives would do that and I am really fortunate".

What about time for model railroading? Well, despite the big basement, the only layout at TCS is the circular track used for testing. But that doesn't mean John has neglected trains. These days he's into....LIVE STEAM! Yep, the man who brought you all those n-scale decoders is a member of Pennsylvania Live Steamers where he was involved in the development of their signal system. He and son John have three 7 ½" gauge steam locomotives including a 2-6-0 Mogul believed to be the last locomotive built by live steam pioneer Carl Puritan. The Forsythes also have a Pacific based on a Southern Railway P-4 and an 0-6-0 that was son John's high school senior project.

Look for some exciting developments from TCS in the near future as they delve further into the DCC market. I can't tell you what it is or John would have to shoot me and we wouldn't want that to happen now would we? Right? Guys???

Additional TCS photos are published in this issue's on line section.

### **Diesel Locomotive Selection & Production Time Period**

by Rich Newmiller, MMR



If you are thinking about adding more power to your diesel roster or just interested in information regarding the production of diesel locomotives this article will provide some prototype insight for consideration. The table lists five manufacturers, which include Alco, Baldwin, EMD-GM, Fairbanks-Morse and General Electric. Together they have produced over 115 engine models (not counting phases) during the period from 1940 until the mid 1990's. General Electric continues to manufacture today but the table data is limited – the majority of the information was obtained from a

June 2000 article in <u>Model Railroader</u> magazine, which provided information on the availability of scale models from various hobby sources.

Note that the table (see next page) lists production years and the key point is the start of production. If your interest is in modeling or collecting engines in a given time period then the table provides a useful listing of the models in production. As an example lets say your time period is 1955. Go to the top of the table and locate the year 1955 – it is mid way between 1950 and 1960 and is shown as a medium weight vertical black line. Lets also say you have an interest in Road Switchers by Alco, specifically an RS-10 or RS-11. Looking at the intersection of 1955 and the RS-10 you will see that model was produced starting the prior year and it will be suitable for the period. The horizontal grey shading presents a visual statement of the production years. If you have a specific railroad in mind, then you will have to do additional research to see if they purchased that model and when they took delivery. As for the RS-11, the grey shading is to the right of 1955 and in your case the model would not have been produced until the following year. Any engine with a grey bar that intersects or is to the left of 1955 is suitable for consideration. Remember, the grey bars only indicated production periods and all of the engines would be in service for many years beyond production and with care and rebuilding some are still working today.

If the model you like is within your time period but your specific railroad do not purchase any then add it to a consist and say it is being transported for either delivery to another customer or is being shipped back to the factory for warranty work or returned after the demonstration period. If all else fails, then don't forget, it is your railroad and you are the Chairman and what you say goes!

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### **January Meet Directions**

To get to the meet on Saturday, from the Ben Franklin Bridge, follow US 30 to Oaklyn and turn left on Cuthbert Road. Watch for the football field on the right and turn right into the back entrance to the high school just before the field. From the Walt Whitman, take I 295 to US 30 and exit onto US 30 West. Follow to Cuthbert Road and turn right, and then proceed as above. Maps and more specific directions will be available in all versions of the January edition of *Clinkers* including the online version.

http://www.njdivnmra.org/Welcome.html

### Planning Ahead ----Division Meeting Schedules

The Philadelphia division is pleased to offer the following activity dates for your planning. If you have an item you would like included, please contact the editor. They will be included on a first come, first served space available basis.

March 12, 2011- Division Meet Montgomery Baptist Church, Montgomeryville, PA Details to follow in next Dispatcher. May 7, 2011- Division Meet
Del Val College, Doylestown, PA
Joint meet with East Coast Santa Fe
Modelers. (see page 3 for news)

**Sept. 17, 2011 Division Meet** Coatesville, PA. More information to follow in future Dispatchers. Clinics, layout tours, contest.

(Note date change for May Meet)

March 25, 26, 2011 - Railroad Prototype Meet - Sheraton Four Points Hotel, Greensburg, PA.

### The Philadelphia Dispatcher

Official publication of the Philadelphia Division of the National Model Railroad Association

4325 Wendy Way Schwenksville, PA 19473

Inside:
January/May Joint Meet Info
Logan MRRC
TCS Article
Engine dating chart
On-line content

Do you need to renew? If the date on your mailing label is highlighted, please renew promptly. Thank you for renewing promptly.

# Discounts for Division Members at Local Hobby Shops Be sure to patronize the area's hobby shops that are now offering discounts on modelrailroading purchases to members of the Philadelphia Division.

Iron Horse Hobby Shop

60 S. 6<sup>th</sup> St. in Reading 10% discount with \$10 min purchase

Herb's Hobbies and Crafts

200 W. State St. in Doylestown \$25 of free merchandise for every \$250 spent

**Bussinger Trains** 

Old Ambler Station, Ambler 10-12% off retail

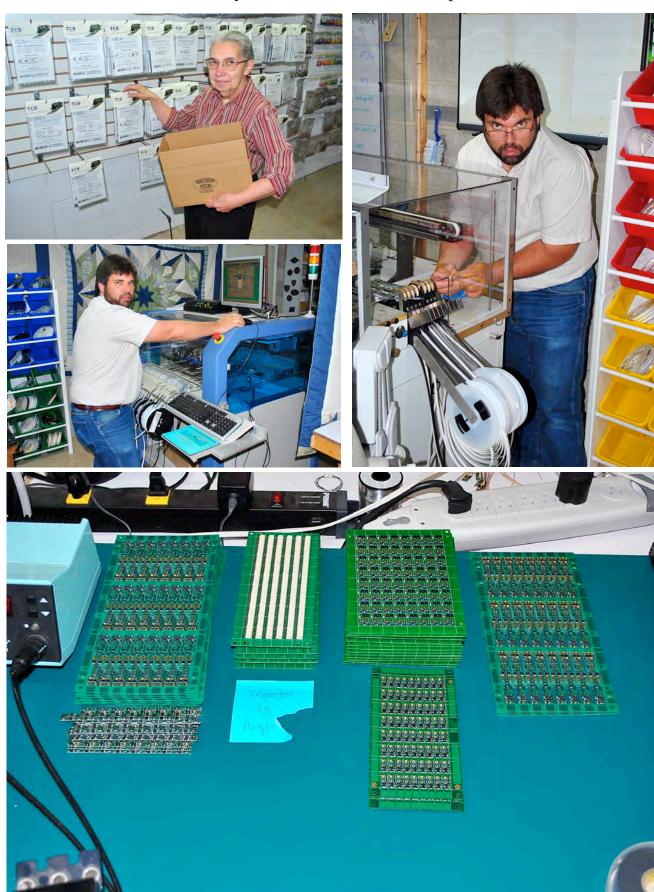
**Nicholas Smith Trains** 

2343 West Chester Pike (3) in Broomall 10% discount (excludes O & G items)

Lin's Junction

128 South Line St. Lansdale, PA 194446 5% in addition to already discounted prices

### Additional Train Control Systems Photos not in the printed edition.



### NMRA National News and Announcements

### November NMRA InfoNet News.

- The Board and officers are already preparing for the <u>upcoming Winter Board of Directors meeting</u> by preparing a list of topics to bring up for discussion. As we mentioned last month, the winter Board Meeting is being held concurrently with the Budget and Operations meetings this year in Las Vegas at the Palace Station Hotel (about 5 miles from the airport). The Budget and Operations meetings, which are by invitation only, begin on Tuesday, February 22 at 9 a.m. The Board Meeting runs from 9 to 5 (or later) on Wednesday, February 23, and 9 to 5 (or later) on Thursday, February 24. All NMRA members are welcome to attend.
- If you recall, the <u>Union Pacific sponsored a photo contest</u> last summer. Entrants were asked to model and then photograph a UP scene. The grand prize was a day-long ride in the cab of a UP steamer. The winner, who was chosen from the over-100 photographs entered, was Harlan "Buzz" Lenander. Buzz had his day in the cab on October 4 on a fantrip that started in the Kansas City (Missouri) Union Station and ended at the old Missouri Pacific Depot in Jefferson City, Missouri. The trip took place October 4. The Union Pacific displayed a congratulatory message on both sides of the Reed Jackson, one of their preeminent steam engines. The UP also posted a short movie clip featuring Buzz and the model he photographed. You can download that clip from: <a href="http://www.uprr.com/newsinfo/attachments/media\_kit/steam/2010/mo-river-eagle/video/1004">http://www.uprr.com/newsinfo/attachments/media\_kit/steam/2010/mo-river-eagle/video/1004</a> a.wmy Watch *NMRA Magazine* for the full story.

*NMRA Magazine* will soon be running a "help wanted" column each month. As you know, we're a volunteer organization and always in need of able bodies to lend a hand. Now that we're going to be putting more emphasis on our website, we especially need help in that area. Here are the positions we're looking for -- if any of your members fit the qualifications below, please pass the their names along to us!

- <u>Electronics engineers</u> with experience in setting up control systems needed to take part in discussions and development of NMRANET. Current bus is designed using CAN. Time commitment: several hours per week.
- PostGreSQL/MySQL, and good experience in HTML and CSS. IIS and VB experience a plus. Time commitment: ~3 hours per week.
- "Members Only" content manager who can oversee our website's "Members Only" section by finding content (e.g. scanning articles from past issues of Scale Rails, uploading finished data sheets, etc). Time commitment: ~6 hours per month.
- <u>Data Sheet program manager</u> with some technical and editorial background to identify new topics to cover as well as older Data Sheets that will benefit from updates and upgrades. Help locating subjectmatter experts will be provided. Time commitment: a few hours per week.

If you have any questions or comments about any of the above, please send them directly to a Director or Officer. You'll find those addresses at www.nmra.org or in Scale Rails.

And if you're changing email addresses, please let me know at this email address: NMRA-infonet@earthlink.net

-Gerry Leone, MMR NMRA Communications Director

### Notes from MER Superintendents Meeting October 2, 2010, Princeton, NJ

- 1. **In Attendance**: Philadelphia, Potomac, James River, Carolina Southern, Carolina Piedmont, and New Jersey Divisions were represented at the meeting.
- 2. **MER Contest Chairman Martin Brechbiel** described the contest judge training program that was originated this year. The program is designed to ensure equality in judging, consistent application of criteria, and provision of information to entrants.
- 3. **President Cason** provided a copy of a Division letter dealing with the NMRA logo issue. As of now, the policy is that Divisions and Regions may still use the old logo and/or any local modifications that they may have been using.

### 4. 501c(3) issue

The IRS has greatly strengthened the criteria for obtaining this status in this post-9/11 age. The application form is much longer and more detailed. All parties who currently hold this status were reminded to file the requisite forms in a timely fashion or IRS will revoke their non-profit status.

### 5. What has worked for Divisions?

Introduction to Operations sessions, along with other hands-on activities.

Shared minicons with neighboring divisions

Large operations tour each year.

Diorama/kit project. Division purchases a number of identical kits thru a hobby shop and resells them at low cost to members, who then build the kit however they choose. Completed kits may be entered in the next year's contest, and a cash rebate is provided to those who do. MER may look into doing this at the region level.

Railpass program has worked well in some divisions.

Steady contact by divisions with NMRA members within their boundaries but who are not active participants.

### 6. What has not worked?

Not exactly a "not worked" item, but one division had a problem in which one member was going to host an open house, but due to a personal issue with another member would not permit that individual to come to his house. Divisions must make it clear that any NMRA member is eligible to attend any official event.

### 7. Recruiting/welcoming/retaining members

Just trying to be more open to new members at open houses, conventions, etc. to ensure they don't feel like outsiders.

List new members in the Division publication

Move meetings around the territory, to equalize distances members need to travel.

Provide business cards for all Division officers, in case they run into potential members.

NMRA Vice President for Administration Dave Thornton told the group that they are looking at better, faster communication to new members about Region and Division activities, locations and points of contact. Some attendees expressed concern about HQ database problems and the need for upgrades in technology.

8 Lapsed members – Business Manager Fred Miller does considerable followup at the MER level.

#### 9. MER Convention Attendance

It was noted that there are simply so many competing activities (historical societies, SIGs and non-rail organizations) during the fall timeframe that it is difficult to attract more people to the MER conventions.

### November Philadelphia Meet debuts Remote Clinic

The Philadelphia Division played host to a clinic at the November 2010 Meet in Wilmington, De. This clinic was not like most clinics! It was presented by Marshall Abrams from his home near Washington DC. The slides were presented in locally Wilmington but Marshall was indeed 100+ miles away using a two way amplified audio connection through Superintendent Greg Shindledecker's i-phone. All attendees were very satisfied with the results.

The event was of interest to all Divisions and Regions and is the subject of an in depth article recently submitted to NMRA Magazine for national coverage. The article is being co-authored by Greg Shindledecker and Marshall Abrams with assistance by other members who assisted with the clinic. Keep watching NMRA Magazine for coverage of what will hopefully open many other clinics to NMRA members across the globe.

Kudos to John Seibert, Greg Shindledecker, Marshall Abrams and the other members who assisted with planning, setup and testing.







Some candid photos from the November Meet